

March 14, 2000

APR 10 2000

Lower Snake River Study
Brigadier General Carl Strock
Department of the Army
Walla Walla District Corps. Of Engineers
201 North Third Ave.
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

Dear General Strock:

The Greater Pasco Area Chamber of Commerce has sent numerous letters in the past 3 to 4 years, strongly opposing any draw downs or dam breaching on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

Our area represents a large part of the area that is impacted by any action on the dams. We are for restoring salmon runs, but destroying our dams and the economy of our region is not the way to approach the solution.

Some of the things that need consideration are:

1. Instead of throwing more money away, we should be spending it on improving the by-pass system at the dams, improving and doing more barging of Smolt and improving and or operating more fish hatcheries and installing more fish friendly generators.
2. We must count hatchery fish as well as "wild fish", which no one in NMFS seems to be able to define.
3. The Endangered Sockeye on the Snake River should be a non-issue sees exhibit "A" attached.
4. We demand the agencies stop killing hatchery fish by the thousands - see exhibit "B" attached.
5. Before a large land grab is implemented, we insist you look at Canada's fertilization program that has brought back many thousands of fish. Set backs are takings of private property, regardless of NMFS opinion - see exhibit "C" attached.
6. The Caspian Tern problem must be addressed. We hear these birds, which the federal agencies see fit to protect, eat from 20 to 40% of the Smolt.
7. Biologists also admit that seals and sea lions kill up to 30% of the salmon in the ocean. The Federal agencies also protect these predators.
8. If salmon are endangered they are being over fished. We still have foreign drift nets out there (The Coast Guard caught 3 just last year). We have white purse seiners fishing for the Indians.

Almost 400-200yd. Gill nets from McNary to Bonneville take a lot more salmon for the Indians than anyone acknowledges. That is far more than they dipped at Celito Falls. We still have commercial gill-netters and sports fisherman taking "endangered salmon". If they are truly endangered, how can this all be allowed?

9. For a number of years, ocean conditions have not been favorable for salmon.
10. The whole idea of improving fish runs by breaching the dams is only conjecture on cooked up computer models. The end result might cause more harm than good and may destroy more fish than it would save. There is no scientific proof it will help.

In summary:

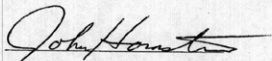
When your biologist admit that you only get, 1/4 of 1% recovery of Smolt going over Bonneville back as adults and 99.6% of them die in the ocean there is something wrong with the arithmetic when you start blaming the dams.

We need common sense to recover salmon runs, not a bunch of hype dreamed up by the extreme groups that are calling for breaching our dams.

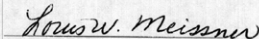
SOCIAL & ECONOMIC IMPUTS ON OUR AREA

1. All the dams proposed for breaching provide us with:
 - a. A major source of hydropower, which is the cleanest and cheapest power we can produce. We need that advantage because the Midwest and Eastern part of the nation enjoys cheaper prices on autos, machinery and many other goods and services because they are closer to manufacturing facilities and also labor is cheaper.
 - b. Cheap transportation. It would sharply raise the cost of shipping farm products, wood products, fuel, export commodities and etc. Our infrastructure of highways and railroads could not handle the increased traffic without spending mega-bucks.
 - c. Endless amounts of recreational opportunities that would not exist without slack water, unless you are a rafter. It would destroy a large habitat for waterfowl, bass and etc.
 - d. Irrigation water. To relocate intakes would cost many millions of dollars and would not be without many problems. Water in many of the aquifers that supply well water would most likely be affected; many of them are irrigation wells.

2. Removing the 4 Snake River dams would result in many acre-feet of mud being washed into the Columbia causing more damage downstream in the Columbia?
3. The Corps of Engineers proved that when you lower the reservoir you do extreme damage to the adjacent roads and railroads because they would settle and cave in.
4. Thousands of jobs will be lost. Agriculture (which includes forest products) will be devastated.
5. Local people who work and do business in the Northwest should make the decisions on how to proceed with salmon recovery, not people in other areas or bureaucrats in Washington D.C. It is our livelihoods at stake and fish should not be more important than people, we can have both.



John Hornstein
President, Pasco Chamber of Commerce



Louie Meissner
Chair Governmental Affair

Exhibit "A" STATUS OF SNAKE RIVER SOCKEYE SALMON

Idaho Fish and Game Department (IDFG) poisoned and eradicated kokanee/sockeye in Yellow Belly, Pettit, and Stanley lakes, all sockeye producers in the upper Salmon River basin, to convert the lakes to trout production. These lakes still have potential to produce sockeye if IDFG migration barriers are removed or bypassed.

STOCK MANIPULATION

The IDFG used toxaphene to poison the nursery areas located in Stanley, Pettit, Yellow Belly, and Hall Roaring Lakes, then installed migration barriers that kept sockeye from again using these lakes. Sockeye salmon and other unwanted fish were eliminated, and replaced with rainbow and cutthroat trout (Yellowstone variety).

Pettit Lake

Hauck (1955) observed sockeye salmon spawning in Pettit Lake. The lake (395 acres) was poisoned by the IDFG in September of 1960 with toxaphene (Hauck 1956). W-

Yellow Belly Lake

Yellow Belly Lake (190 acres) was poisoned with toxaphene in Sept 1961

The IDFG programs described above for Pettit, Yellow Belly, and Stanley lakes were deliberate efforts to substitute trout fisheries for kokanee/sockeye. A U.S. Forest Service biologist later, and for several years, requested, to no avail, that IDFG remove their barriers so that fish could pass freely up and downstream (G. Munther, U.S. Forest Service, personal communication).

Government Fish Story

Nov 5 1999, Investors Business Daily. Article By FRANK R. STEPHENS

From the Atlantic to the Pacific, headlines proclaim that salmon are in decline. The National Marine Fisheries Service, the government agency charged with protecting these fish, has listed salmon on both coasts as threatened or endangered.

The culprit, they tell us, is habitat degradation from such things as development, soil runoff from logging and, adverse weather conditions and decreased river flows from dams.

However the greatest threat to the survivability of the once flourishing species may turn out to be government itself.

To support their claim that salmon populations are at record lows, federal and state agencies have devised a systematic plan to kill fish by the thousands. For example, Oregon state hatchery workers, since 1997, have carried out a program to kill returning hatchery fish. At the Fall Creek Hatchery in the Alsea River basin, 1,500 hatchery coho were clubbed to death in one day with baseball bats, stripped of their eggs and sold for fish bait and fertilizer.

In January 1999 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service admitted that its Coleman National Fish Hatchery on the Sacramento River had slaughtered 343,000 baby chinook salmon and planned to kill another 700,000. Meanwhile, California's state-run Nimbus Fish Hatchery on the American River had destroyed 2.2 million fall-run salmon eggs to reduce the number of fish. The Fish Sniffer sport fishing publication reported hatchery officials revealed they had decreased hatchery production from 20 million to 12.9 million at the request of National Marine Fisheries Service biologists. All of this is very puzzling since salmon used for hatchery propagation originated from naturally spawned populations and are indistinguishable from wild salmon now listed as threatened.

Historically, Atlantic salmon have numbered around half a million. However, 1,758 "wild" salmon returned to U.S. rivers in 1997 with no estimate made of returning hatchery salmon. National Marine Fisheries Service admitted in a published report, "Evaluating the effects of past stockings on native Atlantic salmon ... is difficult due to the paucity of information regarding the number of fish that returned from stocking efforts." Even though there may be an abundance of hatchery salmon returning each year, Defenders of Wildlife recently sued the NMFS for not listing the Atlantic salmon as endangered. Apparently, the NMFS has now succumbed to the pressure agreeing to propose the listing. However, Endangered Species Act listing decisions are supposed to be based on science, not political pressure.

Does any of 'this outrage you' ? It should! Captive breeding is a tool to bring species back from the edge of extinction. Here, however, the slaughter of hatchery-bred fish is being used to push this species to the brink of extinction. Of course, this action gives federal regulators unprecedented control over local land-use planning.

Federal regulators can now take control of all logging, farming, grazing and development on thousands of acres of so-called potential habitat. They will also now control private activity on privately owned property. Was this the true agenda? While Pacific Legal Foundation has sued to stop the needless killing of coho in Oregon, there is more we need to understand. The bureaucrats told us this is an environmental crisis. We now know the real crisis is in the attempt of these bureaucrats to create an emergency in order to extend the reach of their power! Frank R. Stephens is communications officer for Pacific Legal Foundation. (Thanks Wade Gilkey)

Fertilizer increases steelhead

Exhibit "C"

British Columbia biologists report dramatic changes

By Dan Hansen
Staff writer

Despite everything weekend gardeners have heard, it's not always bad when lawn fertilizer makes its way into lakes and rivers.

Usually, but not always.

After 10 years of purposely releasing fertilizer into a Vancouver Island river, British Columbia biologists say they've seen a dramatic increase in the steelhead population. The same population boom hasn't happened on nonfertilized streams, said Pat Slaney, provincial watershed restoration manager.

B.C. biologists are so impressed, they've ordered 34 tons of fertilizer briquets to scatter this spring in as many as 25 island rivers. U.S. biologists haven't yet experimented with fertilizer, but some say it may hold promise.

"We're going full-tilt," said Ken Ashley, a provincial limnologist. "We've got a rack of rivers where the steelhead are on the road to extinction unless we do something fast."

The hope, Ashley said, is to bring back salmon runs that would then load streams with phosphorus and nitrogen the way nature intended: through their own rotting carcasses.

THE RESULTS

Biologists dumped liquid fertilizer in Kootenay Lake in 1991. The number of spawning kokanee increased from 250,000 to 400,000 in 1992. Biologists stepped up the fertilization and more than 2 million kokanee spawned in 1999.

Salmon die after they spawn. A growing quorum of scientists believe the dead fish provide nutrients necessary to the next generation of salmon, as well as to bears and other critters, trees and other plants. Those nutrients come from the sea and

aren't available in the large quantities in the forest.

A recent study published in the journal Fisheries concludes there's a dramatic shortage of marine nutrients in Northwestern states due to declines in salmon. The situation is nearly as dire in British Columbia, said Slaney.

Biologists in Washington and Oregon are fighting nutrient depletion by littering streams with the carcasses of hatchery fish. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife last year distributed more than 100,000 dead fish, said Hal Michael of the agency's hatcheries division.

But there aren't nearly enough rotting fish carcasses to go around.

So far, Michael said, the United States has not tried fertilizing rivers. His request last year for a federal grant to study the idea was denied.

Partly, Michael said, fertilizers haven't been tried because of anti-pollution regulations. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife had to get a pollution discharge permit just to scatter carcasses, he said.

"There's a large regulatory difference in the two countries," Michael said.

Also, he noted, many Washington rivers that flow through urban areas or farm lands suffer from nutrient overload. That can lead to ugly rafts of floating algae that rob the water of oxygen.

Such pollution in the Spokane River led Spokane to ban laundry detergents containing phosphates in the 1990s. It prompted Liberty Lake residents to spend millions of dollars building a sewage treatment plant in the 1980s.

To prevent such pollution, folks with homes on lakes or rivers often are warned not to overfertilize their lawns and to clean up pet excrement on beaches. Ranchers are asked to keep their cows out of rivers.

But the reverse problem occurs when salmon disappear from rivers or when dams prevent nutrients from flowing downstream, said Ashley.

British Columbia's first success with fertilizer came on Kootenay Lake, just north of Idaho.

Dams on the Kootenay River in Montana and Canada block nutrients that feed the lake's plankton. Plankton are vital to kokanee, a landlocked sockeye salmon. The diminutive kokanee feed massive Gerard rainbow trout sought by fishermen.

By 1991, the kokanee and rainbows were disappearing. Kootenay Lake's water was so devoid of life, a boater could see 65 feet into the clear water.

(over)

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Fertilizer: U.S. has not tried procedure yet

Biologists, who were doubtful anything could save the fishery, tried dumping liquid fertilizer from a barge as a last resort. The number of spawning kokanee increased from 250,000 in 1991 to 400,000 in 1992. Buoyed by that success, biologists stepped up the fertilization and more than 2 million kokanee spawned in 1999, said Ashley.

Asked whether anything other than fertilizer could account for the turnaround, Ashley could think of only one thing: "Divine intervention."

Fertilizing streams is more difficult than fertilizing lakes because the current carries away the nutrients as soon as they're released. Ashley and other researchers have tried a variety of techniques in the past, including slowly dripping liquid fertilizer from tubes.

Lasco Inc. of Cleveland solved the problem by making briquets from a granular fertilizer the company normally sells to golf courses. The briquets settle on the bottom and release nutrients over a period of months, said Lasco Vice President Breck Denny.

As a trout fisherman, Denny said he's excited about playing a role in salmon restoration. As a businessman, he sees a potential new market for Lasco's product.

Lasco plans to sponsor a symposium in Portland next year. B.C. biologists will be invited to speak, said Denny, who hopes they'll convince U.S. agencies to consider artificial fertilization of depleted rivers.

But Ashley and Slaney caution that fertilizer alone can't bring back a salmon run decimated by loss of habitat to development, agriculture or dams.

"It's just one part of the puzzle," Slaney said.